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Executive Registry

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Lessons to be Learned from the Cuban Incident1. You can't do it with mirrors.

We are in a cold war.

Every bit as earnest as a hot war.

We are up against an experienced, ruthless opponent.

In the cold war, the prestige of the U.S. is involved.

It is the prestige of leadership.

We can't expect our allies to take the lead.

Remember the infantry motto: Follow me!

2. The U.S. doesn't seem to understand the use of power.

One: Our diplomacy appears not to appreciate the essentiality of certain forward geographic positions to our long-term strategic objectives.

Two: Our diplomacy seems not fully to understand the varied and even subtle forms in which, without formal and provocative commitments, the human and material resources of the military establishment may be brought forward in defense of situations of acknowledged strategic value to us.

Three: Our diplomacy appears reluctant to risk having U.S. military strength exposed, even though this may be indirect and may, in fact, be the only means of maintaining a favorable balance in these situations.

As a result, it can only be concluded that a number of overseas positions of undoubted importance to our security are in jeopardy; that the struggle from position to position could well go against us unless our diplomacy is prepared to draw more extensively upon our military resources, and to put them at risk where necessary. In the final analysis, the "credibility" of our military power will depend upon our willingness to bring it forward whenever our vital interests, and those of our allies, are threatened.

Neither State nor Defense acting unilaterally can bring our vast national power (including our worldwide military strength) to bear on the achievement of our national security objective. With nearly two

centuries of tradition behind them, the two great departments have developed an institutional bias that causes them to approach cold war situations from different and often divergent concepts. State, on its side, tends to be reluctant to apply national power, and particularly military power, during its conduct of diplomacy because of the fear of complicating the strictly political and psychological situation. Speaking quite frankly, elements of State appear to have lost the convictions of our forebearers that the cause of America is just. They seem ashamed of our strength, forgetting that the use of power is evil only if used for evil ends. Defense, on its side, tends to consider its role primarily advisory whenever the political, economic and psychological elements become dominant in a cold war situation. And yet, in practically every power conflict confronting us abroad today, and most conspicuously in the new or weaker nations that lie within our security interests, the military element tends to be central, and it is practically everywhere affected by political, economic, and psychological considerations.

3. The U.S. doesn't have the inter-departmental structure to fight the cold war.

The U.S. needs a National Security Operations Center -- a nerve center for the White House. Provide Committee with 10 March paper. Cite the example of the current Presidential Task Force for Vietnam.

4. Action is needed to halt the erosion of America's will-to-win.

Today the strategy of containment still remains the basis of U.S. policy. It is justified on the grounds that it is the only realistic course of action under conditions of nuclear stalemate. In presenting it to the American people, the compromises and small retreats are everywhere de-emphasized and the impression is left that containment is, in fact, being achieved. Entirely discounting the question of honest reporting which is involved, the net result within the corporate personality of the Executive Branch has been the steady erosion of our most vital national characteristic, our will-to-win. In sum, what it amounts to is that the American team - and with it the entire team of the Atlantic Community and the Free World - is playing for what it hopes will be a draw. Meanwhile, the Communist team is throwing everything it has into the game to win.

The pedestrian nature of our governmental planning processes is even more depressing when viewed against the backdrop of Soviet bloc achievements and programs. Nothing is impossible to their Central Committees. And their leaders do not hesitate to ask the impossible of their

people. They relish the struggle, they seem to enjoy overcoming odds. However much they suffer, they can see they are making progress toward their self-imposed goals. They know they are having an impact on history. And every day they grow more confident that they will succeed in overtaking and in destroying us.

The consequences of an accelerated period of historical evolution are more likely to be violent than peaceful. Human nature is subjected to greater stresses. Decisions must be made more quickly with resulting sacrifices of judgment. Errors become more costly; and efforts to recoup losses become more desperate.

In a foreshortened time scale, competition necessarily becomes more intense. All-out efforts have greater probabilities for decisive success than longer term programs. Prudence dictates greater attention to self-defense and national security than in times of more gradual change. The selective application of physical or economic power at critical points offers greater possibilities for dividends than does containment.

What does all this add up to in terms of the United States, the Atlantic Community and the Free World? It can only mean that during the next decade events are likely to have far more influence on the long term development of history than they have in any similar 10-year period in the past. It places a greater premium on a deterministic philosophy than on a concept based on underwriting or guaranteeing the orderly process of social evolution. It means that the survival of the United States may depend on our willingness to set goals for ourselves that require maximum effort to meet.

##### 5. Criteria for solution of the problem.

What is needed is a joint understanding of the nature of U.S. power in today's world; mutually agreed techniques for its timely employment; and a willingness on the part of State and Defense to accept a collective responsibility for the consequences of the use of this power.

Specifically, this requires:

A. An activist, operational philosophy based on a full realization that procrastination and indecision constitute, in the context of history, a decision as irretrievable as any premeditated act.

B. A greater appreciation of the dimension of time -- a sense of urgency which is so sadly lacking today.

C. A willingness to accept the possibility of mistakes as long as these are made honestly in the furtherance of America's destiny.

D. Recognition of the principle that the conduct of national security affairs includes the conduct of foreign affairs, military operations, economic activities and psychological programs. It requires, therefore, centralized direction from a higher level than any of the separate departments -- to wit, direction from the White House.

"Nerve Center" for the  
White House

[redacted]  
10 March 1961

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"Nerve Center" for the White House

Proposal: Establish an Executive Control Center within the White House, immediately responsive to the President's personal needs, to assist him in exercising true "command supervision" over the many, diverse activities of the Executive Branch.

Services Which the Center Would Provide:

1. Up-to-the-minute intelligence from all government agencies on the progress of world events and the interaction of Free World and Communist Bloc programs. As such it would be a war room for the cold war.
2. Facilities for rapid, secure communications directly from the White House to all parts of the Executive Branch, to Ambassadors and other personal representatives of the President abroad, to the unified and specified commanders in the U.S. and overseas.
3. Current status of major projects or programs which have been approved by the President and are being implemented by the Executive Branch.
4. Repository of facts and information on all activities of the Executive Branch for quick, ready reference by the President and the White House staff.
5. Facilities for presenting this information in succinct form, utilizing the most advanced briefing techniques, to include TV, motion pictures, slides, viewgraphs, tape recordings, etc.

Where Located: In the White House proper.

How Operated: Manned 24 hours-a-day by a specially selected staff assigned from the departments and agencies of the Executive Branch. These young men would be chosen from among a group of trained junior executives whose outstanding ability and initiative had earmarked them for advancement within their respective departments.

Extra Dividends: In addition to providing the services indicated above, the Center would:

1. Stimulate the Executive Branch: The mere establishment of such a Center would have an electrifying effect throughout the Executive Branch. It would reaffirm the President's intention to exert vigorous, personal leadership of the government and would demonstrate that he had provided himself with the necessary mechanism for exerting continuing command supervision over its daily activities.
2. Provide Progress Reports: It would enable the President to receive, on short notice, unbiased reports on departmental or agency operations in any part of the world. These would not be mere "status reports", but would be meaningfully related to his previous decisions in such a way as to enable him to gauge progress toward specific national objectives. By having this type of information available on call, he will be able to undertake the frank appraisal of our net national security efforts which is the very essence of responsible authority.
3. Record Decisions: Whenever briefings are prepared for, or decisions reached by the President, there will be available in concise, visual form for future projection on slides, film or viewgraph the essential facts which were considered at the time along with the actions which were directed. This material will be retained, thus serving a useful "memory function" for the President as he follows the continuing operations of the government at home and abroad. As this material builds up within the Center's files, it will enable the staff to provide quicker, more effective support on a wide variety of subject matter.
4. Assemble Management Information: The Center will also provide the President with management information on major governmental programs. Such information would be obtained in raw form from various responsible officials within the Executive Branch. The Center's staff, working with the experts from the appropriate government offices, would assemble the program data in the manner best suited to meet the personal needs of the President. They would present this management information in a form which will enable him to see clearly the future consequences of his present decisions in the field of programming. By so doing, they will provide him with a much needed management aid to help him supervise the major long-range government programs.

NATIONAL SECURITY OPERATIONS CENTER

During the years that followed World War II, circumstances forced a reluctant America to recognize that a condition of world-wide conflict still existed. This state of affairs came to be called "cold war." It included all forms of the continuing power struggle short of armed combat between regular military forces. It covered a wide spectrum of actions ranging from the exchange of diplomatic notes, on the one extreme, to subversion and guerrilla warfare, on the other.

As the nature of this conflict became clearer, organizational innovations were made within the Executive Branch of our government to provide a mechanism for dealing with this new situation. First came the National Security Council, established in 1947, to assist the President in formulating national policy. Then a Psychological Strategy Board was set up to deal with the more dynamic aspects of the cold war. This was replaced in 1953 by the Operations Coordinating Board. Today even more drastic proposals are under consideration. The Jackson Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery is studying the idea of a "super Secretary of State." President Eisenhower has talked of the need for a "Chief of Staff to the President" to help him coordinate the activities of the various departments and agencies. And Vice President Nixon favors giving the Vice President greater authority and responsibility in waging the cold war, to include the actual "direction" of operations of several key government agencies.

The stepped-up tempo of this search for an organizational solution reflects both dissatisfaction and impatience with the present national security structure of the government. The dissatisfaction stems from the increasing number of setbacks to our national prestige which have occurred during the last few years. The impatience is directed at the pedestrian pace of our bureaucratic, interagency coordinating procedures which seem to be always lagging behind the more flexible, aggressive Soviet initiatives.

Criticism of these deficiencies has not been confined to students of our government here at home. It has become a subject of comment by political leaders abroad. For example, President Mohamad Ayub Khan observed last June that the Pakistanis were beginning to doubt that the governmental machinery of the United States was attuned to the requirements of the nuclear age. While conceding that the United States

had the military striking power to repel any attack, he questioned whether our bureaucracy, which he described as a "cumbersome, sluggish and a clumsy juggernaut," was able to cope with the fast-moving events of the cold war. President Ayub concluded that, in his mind, this constituted "the greatest danger to the free world" today.

More recently, Premier Lumumba, while passing through Liberia in early August, is reported to have remarked that although he was not a Communist and did not want Communists in the Congo, the fact remained that they "responded more quickly to requests for help." He cited specifically the fact that the United States was "unable" to provide him with a plane to take him to the United Nations, but that the U.S.S.R. made one available immediately.

One keen U.S. observer remarked sadly, "There is a widespread impression that we live from astonishment to surprise, and from surprise to astonishment, never adequately forewarned or forearmed, and more often than not choosing between evils, when forethought and fore-action might have provided happier alternatives."\* This failure to anticipate events, and what is worse, our inability to react promptly to events once they occur, is assuming more serious proportions every day. It has been pointed out that we are spending billions of dollars to gear our military weapons systems to a 15 minute response period, but our non-military cold war actions are tied to a time consuming system of committee discussion and debate which should have become obsolete along with the sailing ship.

Today we are engaged in a continuing power struggle in every corner of the globe. We are playing for the highest possible stakes. Modern communications link Washington with all parts of the world, enabling us to receive from our representatives abroad detailed reports in a matter of hours. We have at our fingertips here in the Nation's capital masses of data and thousands of experts on every conceivable subject. We can dispatch special survey teams to any corner of the earth in a matter of hours. Any yet with all these advances in transportation, communications and research techniques, our procedures for conducting the cold war are very much the same as they were at the turn of the century. What then must be done to bring our governmental

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\* Oppenheimer, Dr. Robert, "An Inward Look," Foreign Affairs, Jan., 1958.

procedures up to date; to enable us to respond promptly to the opportunities or threats which result from the continuing inter-action of the Communist and Free World societies?

First of all it is necessary to place our responsible officials in a truly operational environment. This requires a radical revision of the present committee procedures for inter-departmental coordination of governmental operations. Representatives of the various agencies that have going programs in overseas areas must be brought together in an atmosphere which emphasizes the political dynamics inherent in these continuing programs. They must divorce themselves from the present pattern of weekly committee meetings where their energies and talents are largely wasted defending the vested interests of their respective departments. Their efforts must be focussed on the solution of the cold war problems created by U.S. and Communist initiatives in the field. In short, they must be given a sense of urgency consistent with the tempo of modern times. This is sadly lacking today.

The next thing to be done is to relieve the officials responsible for the supervision of day-to-day operations from all policy-making responsibility. One major defect in our present organization is the tendency for our operational personnel to become involved in discussions of policy. Only too frequently they seek a new policy for every new operational situation. As a result, they fail to take the vigorous actions which are required to implement existing directives. An unfortunate characteristic of these discussions by the operators is that they are generally based on an inadequate understanding of the basic policy itself. They are, therefore, largely academic to the problem at hand and serve primarily as an excuse for inaction.

A third requirement is to provide the operational officials with an up-to-date, comprehensive picture of the scope and nature of U.S. and Soviet operations throughout the world. Only by having access to such a global background can they appreciate the inter-relationship of the programs which they are conducting in one part of the world with those in another. It is one of the ironies of our time that with all the vast machinery for coordination existing in Washington today, the only place where one can find the results of both U.S. and Communist programs presented side-by-side is in the daily edition of the New York Times. Bits and pieces of the picture are available in the various departments and agencies throughout Washington and can be obtained by

attending the continuous round of briefings set up for our harried high officials. But only in the pages of this great metropolitan newspaper can one find the whole panorama of the past twenty-four hours of the cold war laid out in a concise, comprehensive form.

The final requirement for the effective conduct of operations in the cold war is a willingness on the part of our senior officials to recognize that in a fast-moving operational situation mistakes are bound to be made. This does not mean that ineptness, poor judgment or inefficiency are to be condoned in high places of our government. On the contrary, a consistent record of "boners" should be justification to replace the official concerned. At the same time, a consistent record of procrastination, of inaction, of "waiting for the dust to settle" should also qualify an official for removal from office. It is far easier in a cut-throat bureaucracy to get promoted by avoiding decisions than by making them. The techniques of referring the question at hand to an "ad hoc" committee, of postponing action until an "on the spot" survey can be made, of delaying until after the next Foreign Ministers or Heads of State meeting are well known and frequently used in the Nation's capital. Somehow a premium must be placed on having the courage of one's convictions; on a willingness to assume responsibility for action. In the present world situation conflict cannot be avoided. Credit and praise should go to the official who at least chooses his own field of battle. Such an individual is by instinct an "operator," with an intuitive "feel" for the cold war.

Fortunately, the United States does not suffer from a lack of good operators who know how to "fly by the seat of their pants." Our whole free enterprise system, being essentially activist, is a training ground for such personnel. Initiative and a willingness to accept the consequences of one's decisions are characteristic of American leaders in every field of endeavor. These talents must be used in the conduct of the cold war. Capable officials are available who can quickly distinguish between those measures which should be carefully planned in advance and those which must be taken immediately in order to exploit targets of opportunity. They recognize that in such cases, if decisions are delayed while the proposed action is being studied or staffed to death, the entire situation can be overtaken by events and lost forever.

A trained operator is one who knows thoroughly and intimately the limits of the policies he has been instructed to implement. He will

be familiar with the history or sequence of events leading up to the operational situation confronting him. He will know how to get necessary facts to check his intuitive decisions quickly. He will know where to turn to obtain sound advice and judgment against which he can cross-check his own instincts. He does not hesitate to make use of our modern communications and high-speed transportation facilities to obtain vital information quickly from the field when this is needed to make a sound decision. And above all, he will analyze operational problems from the standpoint of how best they can be exploited or developed so as to increase the over-all power position of the United States in the world. In summary, he must have a "can-do" philosophy and an indomitable will-to-win.

What then must be done to bring these operators together and to focus their abilities on the problem of winning the cold war? Certainly, the first thing that is required is to provide them with a facility for the centralized control of all U.S. programs abroad. Specifically, this means establishing what might be called a "National Security Operations Center."

Such a center, geared to the tempo of our times, making full use of our modern communications, should be patterned after, and utilize the experience derived from the joint operations centers which were used during the last war to coordinate and control all available air defense measures within a given area. By bringing together in one place the most up-to-date information from all representatives overseas and by presenting this information in a clear, visual form, utilizing the most advanced presentation techniques, to include television, motion pictures, viewgraphs, slide projectors, etc., we will provide our operational officials with the basic tool which they so badly need today -- a comprehensive picture of both U.S. and Communist programs throughout the world. /Display mock-up./ With such a facility, these operators will be able to see quickly the inter-relationships of our own with the enemy's program. They will notice at once areas where there are shortfalls, and will recognize quickly areas where opportunities for exploitation exist. And finally, as the Center is used it will accumulate a regular library of factual material, all readily available for presentation on slides or viewgraphs, which will quickly give the operators the essential background information needed to help them make sound decisions

Assembled together in such a Center would be representatives of all agencies of the government having responsibilities for going programs in the overseas area. These representatives could not, of course, be the designated Cabinet officials. Rather, they would be a group of trained junior executives selected for ultimate advancement in their respective parent agencies. To qualify for this permanent manning staff, they must have demonstrated outstanding ability and initiative within their own organization. Duty in the Operations Center would be a prerequisite for promotion and, as such, would be eagerly sought after. It would provide invaluable training in government operations and would enable these young men to develop a personal, working contact with similarly selected representatives from other agencies of the government.

Basic to any operational concept, and particularly in the fast-moving situations which confronts us today, is the principle of continuing operations. This, in turn, requires that the Operations Center be continuously manned. The specially selected corps of junior officials responsible for the 24-hour a day operation of the Center would take turns at their posts according to a schedule of "watches." As these young "watch officers" man the Center for their regular tour of duty, they will discuss among themselves possible courses of action in the light of the emerging situations. Often these discussions will result in specific recommendations to their Principals. In many cases, when the operating staff agree on a particular course of action, it will be possible for them to secure the necessary approval from their Principals by phone.

Inevitably, however, in the course of manning the Operations Center situations will occur which will require more mature and experienced judgment than the junior officials on duty possess. In such cases, after telephonic consultation with the heads of their respective departments, it would be agreed that these top officials themselves should meet together in the Operations Center. Such a situation is unlikely to occur more than once or twice a week and, in such cases, the operations room's central location in Washington would facilitate such a meeting.

One of the principal obstacles encountered by senior Washington officials when they try to reach agreement on wise courses of action in an urgent operational situation is the present system of separate departmental briefings. When crises arise requiring coordinated action by several governmental agencies, the current procedure is for high ranking

representatives of these agencies to gather in ad hoc meetings for the purpose of making necessary operational decisions. Prior to such meetings, however, each one is given a run down on the situation by that portion of his staff who have been dealing with the problem. Quite apart from the inherent variations in the quality of the various staffs, such separate briefings rarely start from the same set of facts or premises. Sometimes this is due to local agency prejudices, but as often as not it is caused by the inevitable time lag in the dissemination of information throughout the Executive Branch. There is always someone who has not received his copy of an essential cable, or who hasn't heard of a key action which is already underway. As a result, the departmental representatives are forced to spend valuable time at their own meeting bringing each other up-to-date. Even this is a haphazard process which may or may not provide them with the essential common ground for sound decisions. However, with the facilities of an Operations Center available, the key officials could receive an entirely non-partisan briefing by the Center's staff based on the very latest information from the field. They would then, with the assistance of the Center's staff, quickly review the existing policies which were applicable in the current situation.

The Principals, utilizing the Center's direct telephone or telecon communication, would confer, as necessary, with their representatives abroad. The consequences of various courses of action could then be discussed frankly and rapidly among the Principals. Necessary decisions would be reached and properly recorded while necessary implementing orders are being immediately transmitted to the field. At this point, the Principals would then turn the continued manning of the Center back to the regularly assigned staff. These full-time operators, having been present when their Principals had met and made their decisions, would fully understand the "legislative history" lying behind the instructions issued. Thus they would be able to answer subsequent questions which inevitably will come in from the field. Being aware of the various considerations lying behind the decisions, they will be on the lookout for Communist counter-actions which would be of concern to the Principals. As the situation developed, they could keep their superiors fully informed of important developments. Once the Center is established, such procedures and techniques will be quickly devised and its operations will become more and more effective as time goes on.

Another valuable service of the Center would be to provide a mechanism for follow-through on operational decisions to see that they

are actually implemented. Should circumstances change, should Communist counter-actions necessitate additional support for the field or require new U.S. initiatives, this would be promptly recognized by the Center and brought to the attention of the Principals. By thus monitoring the situation as it develops, the Center would, in effect, enable the Principals to exercise intelligent, coordinated, continuous command supervision over their respective programs abroad.

This, in itself, would be a major step forward in the conduct of the cold war. Today, the closest approach to any truly coordinated command supervision is the Operations Coordinating Board Reports. These documents, which deal either with functional subjects, individual countries or regional areas, are prepared annually. Unless they specifically recommend a review of U.S. national policy for the subject concerned, they are not placed on the National Security Council agenda. As such action is the exception rather than the rule, they are rarely read by our top officials. Consequently, the command supervision exercised through the medium of this OCB procedure is practically nil. The Center, by virtue of its continuous 24-hour-a-day operation and its permanent inter-agency staff, would fill this gap. The Principals would be able at any time to ask for and receive an unbiased report on their programs in any part of the world. This would not be a mere "status report," but would be meaningfully related to their previous decisions in such a way as to enable them to gage their progress toward their agreed objectives. By having this type of information available to them on call, the Principals would be able to undertake the frank appraisal of their collective programs which is the very essence of responsible authority. Thus the Center would enable them to exercise the "command supervision" which is so noticeably absent throughout the Executive Branch today.

Where should such a National Security Operations Center be located? The answer to this question depends upon the personality and philosophy of the President. The nature of our government is such that full responsibility for the operation of all U.S. programs abroad is vested in the Executive Branch. The President, as Chief Executive, is not only the Commander-in-Chief of our armed forces; he is the supreme commander for our total cold war effort. Depending upon his own choice, he can, as did the late Franklin D. Roosevelt, run the government's overseas operations personally from the White House. Or he can, as President Eisenhower did when John Foster Dulles was alive, delegate this responsibility to the Secretary of State. However, as pointed out earlier, there is a growing conviction among students of government organization that the cold war

embraces far more than the normal conduct of foreign relations; that it requires a more active, purposeful application of our overseas programs to achieve our national goals; and that, therefore, it cannot be delegated to any one agency, even the Department of State. The consensus of these experts is that the very nature of the problem with all its inter-agency ramifications requires direct control from within the Executive Offices of the President. As a matter of fact, the organizational changes in the national security structure of the government since the end of the war have clearly recognized this requirement and have provided the basic framework for this purpose. Briefly, the President sits at the apex of a triangular structure, one corner of which develops policies (the National Security Council) and the other coordinates their implementation (the Operations Coordinating Board). Sound as this arrangement is conceptually, it has broken down because in the present cold war environment, it is not enough to coordinate the operations of separate departments, they must be centrally directed. This, in turn, requires a radical departure from current procedures whereby the United States attempts to wage the cold war through a hierarchy of inter-agency committees. It requires a new operational concept which stresses time as the central dimension and action as the central philosophy. The National Security Operations Center will provide the modern facilities and the operational environment needed for this job. If it is to be used properly, it must be above the departmental level, and function with the full authority of the White House. This means, it should be located within the Executive Offices of the President, where it would provide, in effect, a continuously manned "war room" for the cold war. Here, the Center could serve as the meeting place for a new Operations Coordinating Board; revised by the elimination of the Treasury Department and the Bureau of the Budget who have little, if any, overseas operational responsibility, and strengthened by the addition of the Vice President, acting as the alter ego of the President and as senior director of all U.S. overseas operations.

Undoubtedly, there will be some with long Washington experience who will question whether the mere establishment of a National Security Operations Center will, in itself, expedite the actual conduct of governmental operations abroad. They may say that important operational decisions require careful consideration by the departmental staffs; that no amount of communications and electronic gear or fancy presentation techniques can change procedures which are based on hundreds of years of experience or alter one iota the statutory responsibilities of the individual departments; and finally, that time is not nearly as important

as sound judgment. They may conclude, therefore, that in reality the Operations Center would be little more than a "gadget." Even though these observations have validity when considered in the context of the past, they need not--unless we choose to let them--apply to the future. Certainly, as far as our busy key officials are concerned, any device, any facility which will cut down on the time they must spend today to keep abreast of world events will give them that much more time for study and reflection, thereby improving their judgment. Furthermore, it is not generally appreciated within government circles that modern communications are not only keeping the American public better informed, but are actually shaping public opinion ahead of governmental policy. The night's take of the world-wide wires services is available at breakfast in the morning newspaper; vivid eye witness reporting by trained observers in critical areas throughout the globe comes in on the car radio as one drives to work; editorial comment on the day's events is listened to on the way home; and during the evening the television takes you to the places where history is being made. This intensive media coverage of current events places the entire American public in an operational environment. It is small wonder, therefore, that we hear mounting criticism of the slowness of governmental operations.

Our responsible officials need all the help we can give them to stay ahead of events and Communist intrigues. But they also need help to stay ahead of public opinion which today breathes down the back of every departmental chief as he scans the telegrams from the field. Surely our top officials are entitled to a better tool for the conduct of their daily operations than their morning issue of the New York Times. And surely our country's facilities for the central direction of the cold war should be as modern as those we are now maintaining to fight the general war which will come if the cold war is lost.

The Erosion of Amer-  
ica's Will-to-Win

January 12, 1959

STAT

On The Erosion of America's Will-to-Win

A nation's greatness, when assessed in terms of history, is measured by its impact on the course of human events. And a nation's impact on human events is directly proportional to the drive, the vigor, the determination of its people to shape their own environment.

This generalization, when applied to today's world, leads to some disturbing conclusions with regard to the United States. First, in terms of the degree of effort being expended by the individual American citizen to change history, the U. S. certainly ranks third in the great triumvirate, well behind Communist China and the USSR. Second, although the U. S. has spent vast quantities of treasure and human resources in all quarters of the globe, this has been done not to change history, but rather to keep history as it is. Third, this infatuation with the status quo causes a general sterility of our political thinking and leads to a tendency to accept the gradual compromise of our political positions rather than face the sacrifices that more vigorous alternatives might require. This growing willingness to compromise is probably the most dangerous development of all as it contributes to the slow erosion of our individual and national will-to-win.

When it became apparent, shortly after World War II, that our hopes for a long period of peace based on the continued cooperation of the five great wartime allies, the U. S., U. K., USSR, France and China, were not going to be realized, we attempted - either consciously or unconsciously - to stabilize the world in the pattern it had fallen into in 1946. It was our intuitive desire to restore, as nearly as was possible following the destruction of the Axis governments, the balance of political power to its pre-war state. This included, in our mind, the resumption by our European allies of their respective spheres of influence in the under-developed areas, which, in the past, had been their traditional responsibility.

This concept soon fell by the wayside because in many of these key colonial areas the Communist organizations, which had grown in political and military strength during the war, initiated a campaign of civil war. In retrospect, it is clear that this series of revolutions was the result of Soviet calculations that the time was ripe to expand the territory under the control of world Communism.

Confronted with this situation, we were forced to admit that the world would not, of its own accord, settle down into some natural state of equilibrium and that even the maintenance of a form of status quo required action on our part. As a consequence, we adopted a policy of containment

which we have been attempting to implement ever since. This strategy, so ably articulated by Mr. Kennan in 1947, was based on the theory that the Communist society contained the seeds of its own destruction. If it could be confined to specific geographic limits "by the adroit and vigilant application of counter-force at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points, corresponding to the shifts and maneuvers of Soviet policy" it would eventually fall of its own weight.

The Kennan thesis was valid only so long as the Western world (1) retained the clear-cut military superiority needed to contain Communist adventurism and (2) had the will and determination to enforce its containment policy. Unfortunately, after a brief period of unquestioned supremacy when the U. S. was the sole possessor of atomic weapons, the West's preponderance of military power diminished rapidly when the Soviets developed their own nuclear capability. And when the first Sputnik was launched doubts were raised as to whether the West retained any military advantage. As for the will and determination to enforce the containment policy, the facts speak for themselves. A comparison of two world maps showing the areas under Communist control in 1948 and 1953 is not a pretty picture. The record will show that even when the U. S. possessed the undisputed capability of destroying the Soviet Union, for one reason or another, we were reluctant to make use of this power to assist the West in achieving its valid political objectives. Despite the fact that we have consistently resisted the extension of Communist control and, as was the case in Korea, have even taken up arms in the struggle, the actual result has been a series of de-facto or negotiated compromises which may have slowed, but certainly have not halted Communist expansion.

Secretary Dulles, when speaking of developments behind Communist borders, has said "the yeast of change is at work". Certainly this is true. Given a situation of true containment we might, with reasonable optimism, look forward to an inevitable evolution, - perhaps violent, perhaps peaceful - within the Communist society which in the end could only accede to the natural human instincts for individual freedom and self-determination. Unfortunately, however, the prerequisites of true containment do not exist. Therefore, while it is undoubtedly a fact that the yeast of change is slowly at work within the Communist bloc, in practical terms it has had negligible effect on the continuing daily struggle between the East and West for world supremacy.

Today the strategy of containment still remains the basis of U. S. policy. It is justified on the grounds that it is the only realistic course of action under conditions of nuclear stalemate. In presenting it to the American people, the compromises and small retreats are everywhere de-emphasized and the impression is left that containment is, in fact, being achieved. Entirely discounting the question of honest reporting which

is involved, the net result within the corporate personality of the Executive Branch has been the steady erosion of our most vital national characteristic, our will-to-win. In sum, what it amounts to is that the American team - and with it the entire team of the Atlantic Community and the Free World - is playing for what it hopes will be a draw. Meanwhile, the Communist team is throwing everything it has into the game to win.

Whether it be the Olympics, horse racing, science, weight-lifting, or economic warfare, the Communists are out to win. They may have their setbacks, but they know we will not press them or hold their feet to the fire when they are in trouble. They know they can study their mistakes and try again when they are ready. They know we are not really trying to beat them; we are just trying to keep them from beating us. No wonder they are confident that in the end they will be victorious. No wonder their young scientists at the Geneva disarmament negotiations have gone out of their way to button-hole members of our delegation and remind them that time is on the Soviet side; that before long they will surpass us in every field. And no wonder, Khrushchev can say with such grim conviction, "We will bury you."

Recently a new theory has emerged as a further justification of the policy of containment. It is based on the premise that as time passes the Communist and democratic-capitalist systems will gradually merge into some form of a socialist society. This point of view is supported by evidence to the effect that within the USSR there has been a noticeable shift away from the doctrinaire Communism of Stalin to the more pragmatic Communism of Khrushchev. Similarly, it is possible to show that the United States and other Western nations have adopted such far-reaching social security, price support and public welfare measures as to give positive confirmation of a trend toward socialism. The time scale for this ultimate convergence is left vague, but the evolutionary nature of the concept places it in the distant future. Nevertheless the impression is given that it is inevitable.

Once this idea of inevitability becomes either consciously or unconsciously accepted within our policy-making circles there is a dangerous tendency to use it as a basis for long-range national security planning. The "convergence doctrine" fits together so neatly with the containment policy and the "yeast of change" theory that they make a tempting package; particularly when they are presented against a background of historical predetermination. They have the additional attraction of allowing their advocates to disengage themselves in large measure from such nasty, specific problems as Berlin, Quemoy, Palestine or Iraq. And where these problems cannot be entirely avoided, when they are examined under these mutually supporting premises, justifiable courses of action soon appear which, while not leading to any definite solution, do recommend

themselves as means of buying time so that things can work themselves out. The result is compromise, inaction and abrogation of leadership.

During the same period over the last ten years, when the "convergence-containment-yeast of change" package was developing, there has also arisen within the United States an ultra-conservative economic philosophy. This has been nurtured on the idea that our national economy, which encompasses such complex and inter-related factors as production, distribution, marketing, wages and taxes, is an extremely delicate mechanism. While it is capable of maintaining today's high standard of living and generous productivity, this is only possible if it is not subjected to undue strain. Under this concept, the U. S. economy might be compared to one of those fine, but delicate old mantelpiece clocks that keep time only as long as they are covered by a glass case. This belief, like so many others that inhibit us today, is a hangover from the great depression of 1929. It is subscribed to by some of our foremost industrial leaders. They in turn have succeeded in passing this philosophy on to the Executive Branch where it has been translated into the doctrine of "hard money; balanced budget." While no one could quarrel with the proponents of this theory if our economy really were a fragile thing, it is entirely inadequate to cope with the world-wide challenge posed by the two rapidly growing state economies, the Soviet Union and Communist China.

This ultra-conservative view of the American economy, while often identified with Republican administrations, has been powerful enough to gain credence even under the Democrats. One has only to recall the period shortly before the Korean conflict, when Mr. Louis Johnson, as Secretary of Defense under President Truman, dedicated himself to the task of holding the Defense budget to an arbitrary figure of \$13 billion. At that time, economists of considerable repute insisted that that was all the United States could stand without risking unnecessary inflation and another terrible depression.

Various groups of citizens, who as early as 1949 were concerned not only with the future of our democratic economy, but also with the growing threat from the Soviet Union, strongly contested this theory. But before they had time to mobilize public opinion against taking such risks with our national security, the Korean War suddenly relegated these timorous economic theories to the ashcan. Our economy took a \$50 billion Defense budget in its stride. So great were our capabilities for rapid economic expansion that we fought the Korean War without any civilian controls or restrictions to speak of, maintaining at the same time our civilian consumption at normal high peacetime levels.

Today with a Defense outlay of approximately \$40 billion, the same budgetary arguments are advanced by the Executive Branch as were put

forward in 1949. And again there can be heard the first rumblings of a growing public ground swell demanding that our policy makers rid themselves of these doubts about the intrinsic strength of our economy. The Committee for Economic Development, the National Planning Association, the Democratic Policy Committee and other bodies whose membership includes some of our top economic authorities, are taking issue with the idea that our economy is incapable of the expansion needed to maintain our first place in world economic production. These dissenters with the "fragile economy" theory point out that our steel production is operating at only approximately 60% of capacity and that of the total existing U. S. production capacity, only three-fourths is being used, with one-quarter in "standby", presumably for fear of over-production.

Alarming as this situation may be in view of Mr. Khrushchev's public challenge to economic competition with the Soviet bloc, it is even more disturbing as another indication of the general deterioration of the American will-to-win. Just as the convergence and yeast-of-change theories support on historical and philosophical grounds the essentially negative political philosophy of hopeful containment so too does the "balanced budget, hard money" theory reinforce it on economic grounds.

The pedestrian nature of our governmental planning processes is even more depressing when viewed against the backdrop of Soviet bloc achievements and programs. Nothing is impossible to their Central Committees. And their leaders do not hesitate to ask the impossible of their people. They relish the struggle, they seem to enjoy overcoming odds. However much they suffer, they can see they are making progress toward their self-imposed goals. They know they are having an impact on history. And every day they grow more confident that they will succeed in overtaking and in destroying us.

True, the Soviet Union and Communist China are confronted with staggering obstacles and explosive internal problems. But they are able to give the impression that they will brush these aside and surge ahead. In the case of the USSR it is able to lend credence to its claims by dramatic achievements in the fields of nuclear science and outer-space exploration. Behind these it has the solid base of rapidly increasing national production in both industry and agriculture. In addition, it is prepared to accept the risks involved in forcing consideration of, and in accepting the consequences of important changes in the political balance of Europe.

As for Communist China it is turning history upside down by converting its greatest liability, over-population, into an unprecedented and perhaps incalculable asset. It answers Malthus with Marx. The total organization of the life of its 600 million souls every hour of the day, every

day of their life, from birth to death, is so staggering in its concept, so alien to all our impulses, and so fearful in its implications if it succeeds, that our policy makers have been reluctant even to address themselves to the problem. Instead they seem to be hoping, as they have so often done in the past with other difficult issues, that if they ignore it long enough it will go away.

It is true that by subjecting their economies and people to unbearable strains, both China and Russia may over-reach themselves and be drawn down in the maelstrom of civil war. But while this is a possibility, the outcome of which might offer hope for a better world, it is hardly an assumption the U. S. can use to plan on. In fact, the forces at work today are so vast and unpredictable that it is difficult to find any trustworthy benchmarks from which to survey the future. However, on the basis of events since the end of World War II, there is one important truth that should be recognized as a determining factor in national policy. This is, that the time scale of historical change has been greatly foreshortened.

The consequences of an accelerated period of historical evolution are more likely to be violent than peaceful. Human nature is subjected to greater stresses. Decisions must be made more quickly with resulting sacrifices of judgment. Errors become more costly; and efforts to recoup losses become more desperate.

In a foreshortened time scale, competition necessarily becomes more intense. All-out efforts have greater probabilities for decisive success than longer term programs. Prudence dictates greater attention to self-defense and national security than in times of more gradual change. The selective application of physical or economic power at critical points offers greater possibilities for dividends than does containment.

What does all this add up to in terms of the United States, the Atlantic Community and the Free World? It can only mean that during the next decade events are likely to have far more influence on the long term development of history than they have in any similar 10-year period in the past. It places a greater premium on a deterministic philosophy than on a concept based on underwriting or guaranteeing the orderly process of social evolution. It means that the survival of the United States may depend on our willingness to set goals for ourselves that require maximum effort to meet.

Specifically, it requires a much greater utilization of the productive capacity of our industry and labor; a new economic philosophy designed to gear our economy to a more rapid turnover of goods, services and capital; a revised tax structure to encourage rapid amortization of production facilities; a generous policy of government underwriting of private capital

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invested abroad to stimulate the flow of such capital into under-developed areas; a policy of defense expenditures designed to meet our world-wide political commitments and give us the requisite military power to support a flexible, yet courageous, political policy in our dealings with the Soviet bloc.

We cannot hope to initiate such a comprehensive program unless we are prepared to accept the unpleasant reality that we are in an all-out struggle with the Communist bloc. One side is going to win; the loser could very well be destroyed. Containment will not win. "Where the frontier between civilizations stands still," Toynbee warns, "time always works in the barbarians' favor."

Sooner or later the United States Government and its people will recognize the true nature of this conflict. Then there will develop almost instinctively a great surge of public opinion in support of an activist program in the American tradition. We will, first of all, demand that the intellectual leaders of our academic community rededicate themselves to a belief in America's high purpose and ultimate destiny. We will not allow our young people to be sent forth into public life, as many are today, ashamed of their country's wealth, convinced that we have already passed our historical prime, believing that nothing is important enough to fight for, and unwilling to make the sacrifices which will be required to defeat world Communism. Second, we will move toward a policy of welcoming rather than shying away from competition with Communist societies. Third, whatever form this competition takes, the public will insist that we participate with the idea of winning. And finally, the voters will not let the Executive Branch go on conducting the affairs of our government in hopes of achieving merely a compromise or modus vivendi with the Soviet bloc. Political pressures originating in the local communities will insist that our foreign policies and the work of our representatives abroad be evaluated on the basis of how much they have contributed to the ultimate victory of our free society over the Communist society.

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